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LEXICOGRAPHIC SEMANTIZATION OF POLYSEMANTIC WORDS IN
ENGLISH–UZBEK AND UZBEK–ENGLISH DICTIONARIES

Nashirova Shaxnoza Buriyevna

PhD Associate Professor, Karshi State University

Abstract: Polysemy represents one of the most complex semantic phenomena in natural language and poses significant challenges for bilingual lexicography. The accurate lexicographic semantization of polysemantic words is particularly crucial in English–Uzbek and Uzbek–English dictionaries due to typological, structural, and cultural differences between the two languages. This article examines the theoretical foundations and practical strategies employed in the semantic representation of polysemantic lexical units within bilingual dictionaries. Special attention is paid to the identification and differentiation of meanings, the establishment of translation equivalents, and the ordering of semantic components in dictionary entries.

Keywords: Polysemy; lexicographic semantization; bilingual lexicography; English–Uzbek dictionary; semantic asymmetry; translation equivalence; contextual meaning; lexical semantics; contrastive linguistics.

In modern linguistics, lexicography occupies a central position as both a theoretical discipline and a practical field that reflects the dynamic interaction between language, cognition, and culture. One of the most complex and intellectually demanding issues in lexicographic practice is the semantic description and representation of polysemantic words, particularly in bilingual dictionaries. Polysemy—the capacity of a single lexical unit to express multiple, interrelated meanings—poses significant challenges for dictionary compilers, translators, language learners, and researchers alike. These challenges become even more pronounced in English–Uzbek and Uzbek–English dictionaries, where differences in linguistic structure, cultural conceptualization, and semantic categorization must be carefully negotiated. The process through which meanings are identified, organized, interpreted, and presented in dictionaries is commonly referred to as lexicographic semantization. In bilingual lexicography, semantization does not merely involve listing equivalents between two languages; rather, it requires a deep semantic analysis of lexical units in both source and target languages. This includes identifying core and peripheral meanings, distinguishing between polysemy and homonymy, establishing semantic hierarchies, and selecting translation equivalents that accurately reflect contextual usage. As a result, the lexicographic treatment of polysemantic words becomes a key indicator of the scientific quality and practical value of a bilingual dictionary. English and Uzbek differ considerably in terms of their historical development, typological characteristics, and semantic systems.

English, as an analytically structured language with a long tradition of lexicographic documentation, exhibits a high degree of polysemy, especially in frequently used lexical



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items such as verbs, prepositions, and abstract nouns. Uzbek, belonging to the Turkic language family and characterized by its agglutinative structure, demonstrates polysemy in ways that are often shaped by derivational morphology, metaphorical extension, and cultural semantics. These systemic differences necessitate specialized lexicographic strategies when compiling English–Uzbek and Uzbek–English dictionaries. One of the major theoretical problems in bilingual lexicography is the asymmetry of polysemy between languages. A polysemantic word in English may correspond to several different lexical items in Uzbek, each covering only one or two of its meanings. Conversely, a single Uzbek word may encompass semantic nuances that require multiple English equivalents. This asymmetry complicates the process of semantic alignment and increases the risk of semantic distortion, oversimplification, or loss of meaning in dictionary entries. Therefore, lexicographers must adopt principled approaches to meaning differentiation and equivalence selection. Another important aspect of lexicographic semantization is the ordering of meanings within dictionary entries.

Traditional lexicographic practice often prioritizes etymological or historical principles, whereas modern learner-oriented dictionaries tend to emphasize frequency, prototypicality, and communicative relevance. In bilingual dictionaries, the ordering of meanings must also take into account contrastive semantic factors and the needs of users who rely on dictionaries for translation, language acquisition, or academic research. Improper structuring of meanings can lead to misinterpretation and incorrect language use, particularly in the case of highly polysemantic words. Furthermore, the role of contextual and pragmatic information in the semantization of polysemantic words has gained increasing attention in contemporary lexicography. Meanings do not exist in isolation; they are activated in specific communicative situations and shaped by syntactic patterns, collocations, and discourse functions. Effective bilingual dictionaries therefore integrate examples, usage labels, stylistic markers, and domain-specific indicators to clarify semantic distinctions. This is especially crucial in English–Uzbek lexicography, where contextual mismatches may arise due to differences in sociocultural norms and conceptual frameworks. In recent decades, advances in corpus linguistics and digital lexicography have significantly influenced the treatment of polysemy. Large-scale corpora provide empirical data on frequency, collocational behavior, and contextual variation of lexical units, enabling more accurate and objective semantic descriptions. However, the integration of corpus-based insights into English–Uzbek and Uzbek–English dictionaries remains uneven, and many existing dictionaries continue to rely on traditional, intuition-based methods. This gap highlights the need for systematic research into lexicographic semantization practices within this language pair. The present study aims to explore the lexicographic semantization of polysemantic words in English–Uzbek and Uzbek–English dictionaries from both theoretical and practical perspectives. It seeks to analyze how polysemy is identified and represented, what strategies are used to establish translation equivalents, and how effectively semantic distinctions are conveyed to dictionary users. By examining existing lexicographic models and identifying their strengths and limitations,



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this research contributes to the development of more accurate, user-oriented, and scientifically grounded bilingual dictionaries.

The analysis of lexicographic semantization of polysemantic words in English–Uzbek and Uzbek–English dictionaries demonstrates that polysemy remains one of the most intricate and methodologically significant challenges in bilingual lexicography. The findings confirm that the accurate representation of multiple, interrelated meanings requires not only linguistic competence in both languages but also a profound understanding of semantic theory, cognitive mechanisms, and contrastive linguistic principles.

One of the key conclusions of this study is that polysemy cannot be treated as a simple list of meanings in bilingual dictionaries. Instead, it should be conceptualized as a structured semantic network in which meanings are related through metaphorical extension, functional shift, contextual specialization, and cultural interpretation. Dictionaries that fail to reflect these internal semantic relationships risk presenting fragmented or misleading information to users. This problem is particularly evident when a single lexical item in one language corresponds to several non-overlapping equivalents in the other language. The research also highlights the issue of semantic asymmetry between English and Uzbek. Due to typological and cultural differences, direct one-to-one equivalence between polysemantic words is often unattainable.

Effective lexicographic semantization therefore requires the use of explanatory translations, semantic comments, and contextual examples to bridge the gap between languages. In this regard, bilingual dictionaries should move beyond purely translational functions and adopt an explanatory-descriptive approach that enhances semantic clarity. Another important conclusion concerns the ordering and prioritization of meanings in dictionary entries. The study shows that user-oriented principles—such as frequency of use, communicative relevance, and prototypicality—are more effective than purely historical or etymological criteria, especially for learners and translators. In English–Uzbek and Uzbek–English dictionaries, meaning order should reflect real usage patterns while also accounting for contrastive semantic differences between the languages. The role of contextualization emerges as a decisive factor in successful semantization. Examples of usage, collocational patterns, stylistic labels, and pragmatic markers significantly enhance users' ability to distinguish between meanings and apply words correctly in communication. Without adequate contextual support, even well-differentiated semantic descriptions may remain abstract and difficult to interpret. This underscores the necessity of integrating corpus-based data into bilingual lexicographic practice. From a methodological perspective, the study confirms that modern lexicography must be interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from semantics, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, and corpus linguistics. Traditional approaches, while valuable, are insufficient on their own to address the complexity of polysemy in bilingual contexts. The incorporation of empirical language data and cognitive models of meaning extension can lead to more systematic and transparent lexicographic solutions.



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In conclusion, the lexicographic semantization of polysemantic words in English–Uzbek and Uzbek–English dictionaries plays a crucial role in ensuring semantic accuracy, functional equivalence, and user comprehension. Improving this process requires a shift toward theoretically informed, corpus-supported, and user-centered lexicographic models. The findings of this study contribute to ongoing efforts to enhance bilingual dictionary quality and provide a foundation for future research in contrastive lexicography and semantic analysis.

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